

**TO THE RIGHT HONORABLE W. E. GLADSTONE, HER MAJESTY'S MINISTER OF
STATE FOR THE COLONIES.**

THE PETITION OF THE QUEBEC BOARD OF TRADE.

RESPECTFULLY SHEWETH,

That your Petitioners observe with deep anxiety the contemplated adoption by Her Majesty's Government of a system of Commercial policy at variance with those maxims of protection and old established principles which have hitherto been acted upon in regulating the trade of Great Britain and her possessions abroad.

That the introduction into the Imperial Parliament of measures, the operation of which will immediately deprive the Province of Canada of a great portion, and at no distant period of all the protection her produce now enjoys in the Markets of the United Kingdom, should be received by your Petitioners with anxiety and alarm, cannot be a matter of surprise.

Convinced as Your Petitioners are of the desire of Her Majesty's Government to encourage the Commerce of the Colonial possessions in North America and promote the welfare of Her Majesty's Subjects therein, and convinced also that any Legislative measures prejudicial to the North American Colonies must be prejudicial to the shipping and other great interests of Great Britain, they beg respectfully to bring under your consideration certain suggestions which it appears to them would, if carried out, be beneficial to the Colonies and the parent state, whose interests are inseparable.

That in the Session of last year the Congress of the United States of America enacted a law, (called the Drawback Law) allowing a remission of the duties on British and other Foreign Manufactures and produce imported into the United States, on the same being exported inland into Canada, and a Bill is now in contemplation to allow the transportation of Canadian produce through the Territory of the United States to an Atlantic Shipping Port, for exportation to Great Britain and other foreign countries, free.

That the question no doubt will suggest itself to you, whether the natural effect of this seductive law will not gradually, silently, and imperceptibly to themselves, wean the inclinations of the subjects of Great Britain from their true allegiance to the Parent State, and bias their minds in favor of a closer connection with a Foreign Country through which the transport of their Merchandize and produce is encouraged, and a consequent more frequent intercourse with its Inhabitants produced.

That the operation of this Law has been greatly to increase the inland importation into Canada of various articles the produce of Foreign Countries, such as Teas, Wine, Fruit, Sugar, Coffee, Molasses, and others, so much so as to cause a sensible diminution of the import of these articles by the St. Lawrence, and Your Petitioners in corroboration of this statement solicit your attention to the fact, that in the article of Sugar alone, the importation into Canada from the Port of Oswego in the United States, amounted in 1845 to 1600 Hhds., and previous to the enactment of the Drawback Bill the Exportation from that port did not amount to 50 Hhds., and further that the Importation of Muscovado Sugar by the River St. Lawrence in 1844 was 8,177,581 lbs., and in 1845 2,853,240, being a diminution of 5,324,341 lbs.

That the cause of the increased inland Importation into Canada of these articles through the United States, and the diminution of the Imports by the channel of the River St. Lawrence, is, in the opinion of Your Petitioners, to be attributed to the American Drawback Bill—the existence of the Imperial duties on Imports by the St. Lawrence and the higher tolls on our Canals as compared with the tolls in the United States.

That the effect of the existence of the Imperial duties on Imports by sea in conjunction with the Drawback Bill, is to erect a barrier to the passage through our Canals of the produce of Foreign Countries and British Manufactures, and to neutralize the benefit to be derived by Her Majesty's Subjects in Canada in constructing those magnificent works at an enormous expense, and in fact, to enact a penalty on their being used; a state of things that never could have been contemplated when these works were commenced.

Your Petitioners therefore respectfully suggest that the Imperial duties under the Act 8 & 9, Vict., Cap. 93, on all flour and provisions imported into this Province by Inland Navigation be repealed, and that such articles so imported and conveyed through the Channel of the River St. Lawrence to a Shipping Port should acquire a Colonial character and be admitted into the United Kingdom on the same terms as the Produce of the Province, and that the Imperial duties on all Importations by Sea only, be also repealed.

Your Petitioners presume to suppose that these measures would not directly or indirectly be prejudicial to British interest, while they would secure to this Province a large inland Carrying Trade, employ British Capital, create an extra demand for labor, increase the consumption of British Manufactures, augment the revenue of our splendid Canals, and above all, give further employment to British Shipping, especially in the conveyance of Flour and Provisions imported inland for Exportation to British Ports, which is made manifest by consideration of the fact that upward of one third of their cost consist in incidental charges of inland transportation and Atlantic Freight. And Your Petitioners further presume to suppose that an extensive inland trade once established through the Channel of the St. Lawrence would continue to flow in that direction after the cause that diverted it from other outlets to the Ocean had ceased to exist.

Your Petitioners perceive that the article of Timber is one of those which it is intended by Her Majesty's Ministers to protect to a certain extent, by reducing the present differential duty from 25s. to 15s. per load, but they beg to observe that the present is an *apparent* not a *real* protection, inasmuch as the average rate of freight between timber imported from the Baltic and North America, is fully 20s. per load in favor of the Baltic, from the greater distance from America to Great Britain, reducing thereby the *real* protection to about 5s. per load, and if the apparent protection is reduced to 15s. per load, as contemplated, it will in effect be equivalent to a premium in favor of Baltic Timber of 5s. per load, and it is important also to observe that that very distance which thus places Colonial Timber in so disadvantageous a position, makes the North American Colonial Trade the great nursery for British Seamen, and promotes the Shipping interest of the United Kingdom.

Your Petitioners therefore respectfully suggest that the proposed reduction of duty on Baltic Timber of 5s. per load, 5th April, 1847, 5s. 5th April, 1848, be reduced to 2s. 6d. per load, at those respective dates, and that the contemplated reduction in the duty on Sawn Timber be reduced proportionably.

And as in duty bound, Your Petitioners will ever pray.

Quebec, 20th March, 1846.

